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TWO

SERMONS,

ON THE

Chriſtian Sabbath,

FOR DISTRIBUTION

IN THE NEW SETTLEMENTS

OF THE

UNITED STATES.

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ON THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH.

SERMON I.

REVELATION I. 10.
I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day.

THE Apoſtle John was one of thoſe, who by their doctrine and works bare teſtimony to the reſurrection and divinity of Jeſus Chriſt. For this teſtimony, he was baniſhed by the Roman Emperor to an iſland called *Patmos*, a dreary, uninhabited iſland in the *Archipelago*, which is a part of the *Mediterranean* ſea.

As his crime was preaching the goſpel of Chriſt, his perſecutor choſe to ſend him into a ſolitary and deſolate place, where he would have no opportunity to propagate his religion. But no ſolitude could exclude him from communion with God—no artifice of man could defeat the purpoſe of heaven. Here was communicated to him, in viſion, that wonderful revelation, which contains a prophetic ſeries of events, from that time to the end of the world, and which, in every age, is a ſtanding demonſtration of the truth of the glorious goſpel of Chriſt. 'The teſtimony of Jeſus is the Spirit of prophecy.'

John makes particular mention of the *day*, on which he received the divine communication. 'I was in the Spirit on the *Lord's Day*.'

The churches, to whom he wrote, knew and obſerved *this day*. He named it to them to ſhew, that their Lord had put a diſtinguiſhed honor upon it, and that they were bound to keep it holy in honor and obedience to him. On this day John was *in the Spirit*. Being engaged in the exerciſes of piety and devotion, he enjoyed that high

communion

communion with God, which, at other times, he had seldom known. By a pious observance of God's consecrated day he could have communion with him in a wilderness.

We will here consider *the day*, which is distinguished by the name of *the Lord's day*—the *manner* in which the holy apostle was *employed* on this day—and the *advantage*, which he found in his employment.

We will then attend to the instructions, which may be collected from our subject.

I. We observe, first, that the apostle speaks of a *certain day*, distinguished from all others by the name of the *Lord's* day.

As he was writing to *Christian churches*, and expresly to the *churches in Asia*, he undoubtedly called the day by a name, which was then common and familiar among *Christians*. We may therefore conclude, that there was a certain day, which, in the apostles' times, was known and observed in all the churches, as eminently and peculiarly the *Lord's* day. And this must be the *first day* of the week, the day on which the Lord arose from the dead; for no other day is mentioned in the New Testament, as in any respect distinguished among Christians from other days, or as entitled to the peculiar honor of being called by this name.

As the sacrament of the *supper*, which was instituted in remembrance of Christ's death, is called the *Lord's supper*; so the day on which he arose from the dead is called the *Lord's day*. As the supper is distinguished from all other festivals by the expres institution of Christ, and by his expres command to observe it in remembrance of his death; so the day of his resurrection is distinguished from all other days by this great and important event, and sequestered by his authority as a day of religious worship among Christians, that this interesting event might the better be kept in remembrance. There is the same reason, why Christians should have a standing memorial of his resurrection as of his death. The supper is the memorial of the one; the Christian sabbath is the memorial of the other. And *this* is called the Lord's *day*, for the same reason, as *that* is called the Lord's *supper*. The

The name seems to be taken from the 24th verse of the 118th Psalm, where David, speaking prophetically of Christ's resurrection, says, 'I will praise thee, for thou art become my salvation. The stone, which the builders refused, is become the head of the corner. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. *This* is the day, which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice in it, and be glad.' Here is a plain intimation, that the day, on which the marvellous work of Christ's resurrection should be accomplished—the day, when the stone rejected by the builders should be made the head of the corner, would be consecrated for, and observed by the church, as eminently the *Lord's* day—the day which he had made in a peculiar sense—had dignified by his resurrection, and appointed by his authority for religious worship.

And we find in fact, that this day, immediately and constantly, after our Lord's resurrection, was observed among his disciples as a day sacred to piety and devotion. And the observance of it was doubtless in compliance with the previous instructions of him, who is Lord of the sabbath; otherwise we can hardly suppose, it would have begun so soon, and prevailed so generally, as it appears to have done.

The apostle John, in his gospel, tells us, that Jesus rose from the dead early on the *first day* of the week. 'And the *same day*, at evening, being the *first day* of the week, when the disciples were *assembled together*, came Jesus and stood in the midst of them, and said, Peace be unto you.' And on the *eighth* day after this, when the disciples were again *assembled together*, came Jesus, as before, and stood in the midst of them.

There is certainly some reason, why these circumstances are so particularly remarked, once and again. And what could it be, but because this day was, in future, to be distinguished by the religious assemblies, of Christians, and the gracious presence of Christ in them?

We are told, in the history of the acts, that 'when Paul and his company came to Troas,' where was a Christian church, 'they tarried there seven days; and on the

first

first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow.' And because this was the day, on which Christians statedly assembled for religious worship, Paul gives instructions to the churches of Corinth and Galatia, that, in order to prepare a collection for the suffering saints in Jerusalem, 'every one, on the *first day* of the week, should lay by him in store, as God had prospered him.'

This day was honored by the first remarkable effusion of the divine Spirit on the apostles of Christ, and the preachers of his gospel; and by the first signal instance of the success of their preaching. 'When the day of *pentecost* was fully come, the *disciples* were *all together with one accord.*' This is the same festival, which, in the law of Moses, is called *the feast of weeks*; i. e. of seven weeks, or one week multiplied into another, which make forty nine days. It was forty nine days after the second day of the passover. *Pentecost* signifies *the fiftieth.* It is so called, because it was celebrated on the fiftieth day from the first day of the passover. The first day of the passover was the Jewish sabbath; the fiftieth day from thence would be the *first* day of the week. On this day the disciples were *all together.* On this day Christ fulfilled the promise, which, before his ascention, he made to his disciples, that 'they should be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.' On this day Peter preached to the assembled Jews; and the word came with power and with the Holy Ghost. Multitudes were awakened and converted, and the *same day* there were added to the church three thousand souls.

In this chapter, which contains our text, we have another example to our purpose. John, in his vision, beheld the churches in Asia assembled, on *the Lord's day*, for religious worship, and the Lord Jesus walking among them, to observe their order, to assist their pastors, and to impart his grace. He says, 'I was in the spirit on the Lord's day. And I heard behind me a great voice, saying, I am the First, and the Last. And what thou seest write in a book, and send to the seven churches which are in Asia. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks,

dleſticks, and in the midſt of them one like the ſon of man —his eyes were as a flame of fire— and he had in his right hand ſeven ſtars.--The ſeven ſtars are the *angels* of the ſeven churches, and the ſeven candleſticks are the ſeven *churches*.' This viſion plainly inſtructs us, that the Lord's day was the time, when the churches aſſembled for hearing the word —that on this day, their reſpective angels or paſtors attended to preach the word to them--and that the Lord Jeſus, in a peculiar manner, honoured this day by his gracious preſence with his worſhipping aſſemblies, & miniſtering ſervants.

Theſe examples ſufficiently demonſtrate, that the churches, from the time of Chriſt's reſurrection, and during the life of the apoſtles, met for ſocial devotion on the firſt day of the week, and that they did this with the approbation of him, who is Lord of the ſabbath, and in conſequence of his inſtitution.

We find, indeed, that Paul often went into ſynagogues to preach on the Jewiſh ſabbath, or the ſeventh day of the week; for as this was the day, on which the Jews aſſembled for worſhip, it was the moſt favorable opportunity to preach the goſpel to *them*. But wherever *Chriſtian* churches were eſtabliſhed the *firſt day* of the week was invariably obſerved as ſacred time. *This* was the day on which they met together to hear the word, break bread, and unite in prayer and praiſe.

That a *ſeventh part* of time ſhould be ſequeſtered for the purpoſes of piety and devotion was a law as early as the creation of man. 'On the ſeventh day God ended his work, which he had made; and he bleſſed the ſeventh day and ſanctified it.' This law is not only recorded by Moſes for the Jews, but ſeems to have been conveyed to other nations, by tradition. How elſe ſhould it be, that nations, which had no knowledge of, or paid no reſpect to the moſaic law, ſhould think of dividing their time into periods of ſeven days? Periods of *years* are naturally marked by the declinations of the ſun: periods of *months* are alſo marked by the changes of the moon: periods of days are marked by the viciſitudes of light and darkneſs. We eaſily ſee, how mankind came to agree in *theſe* diviſions of time. But how came they to think of theſe *ſep-*

tenary periods of days? Doubtleſs they were taught, from the beginning, to reverence one day in ſeven as conſecrated to God.

The ſons of Adam had their ſtated ſeaſons of worſhip. Theſe were probably at the end of the days appointed for labor. 'Abel was a keeper of ſheep, and Cain was a tiller of the ground.' They both were employed in ſecular occupations. 'And in proceſs of time;' or, as the margin reads, agreeably to the original, '*at the end of the days*, they brought the one of the fruit of his ground, and the other of the firſtlings of his flock, an offering unto the Lord.'

Noah, after the ark had reſted, conſtantly obſerved periods of ſeven days in ſending forth his doves, to diſcover whether the waters of the flood were abated.

The Jews, in the wilderneſs, before the law was given from Sinai, obſerved one day in ſeven, as a holy ſabbath; and God, by withholding the manna on a certain day, pointed out *this*, as the day of reſt. Moſes, by God's direction, ſays to the people on the ſixth day, 'Tomorrow is the reſt of the holy ſabbath. Six days ye ſhall gather the manna; but on the ſeventh, which is the ſabbath, there ſhall be none.'

When the law was given, there was placed among the *moral* precepts, a command to obſerve a *ſeventh* part of time as holy to God. This with the others, was ſpoken by the voice of God to the people, and written with the finger of God on a table of ſtone, and depoſited by the order of God in the ark of the covenant. Theſe circumſtances plainly indicate its moral and perpetual obligation.

The contempt of the ſabbath is in ſcripture ranked with idolatry, and other groſs corruptions and immoralities; for it always was followed with a general depravation of ſentiments and manners. One reaſon, why the Jews were to obſerve the ſabbath, was that they might not be ſeduced to idolatry: And one reaſon, why Chriſtians are not to forſake the aſſembling of themſelves together on the Lord's day is, that they may hold faſt the profeſſion of their faith.

The prophets, in their reproofs and exortations to the

Jews,

Jews lay particular weight on the religious obſervance of the ſabbath, and diſtinguiſh this from all *ceremonial* obſervances. This they urge, in degenerate times, as the firſt ſtep to a reformation, and a principal mean of national virtue, ſecurity and happineſs: And the judgments which befel that nation are oftener aſcribed to their profanation of God's holy day, than to any other particular crime; for this was the ſource of all crimes.

If we believe, that there is one ſupreme God, who exerciſes a moral government in the world, we muſt believe, that we are bound to worſhip him. And if we believe, that we are made to ſubſiſt in a ſocial connection, and to ſerve one another in the exerciſe of mutual benevolence; and that God extends his government to ſocieties, as well as to individuals, then we muſt believe, that *ſocial* worſhip is a *moral* duty. If we are to worſhip God in a *ſocial* manner, there muſt be ſome fixed and known ſeaſon for this purpoſe. And as mankind would not be likely to agree on the time, it is reaſonable to expect, that God, in a revelation given to men, would appoint the time for them. Thus far the obſervance of a ſabbath is matter of *moral* obligation, as really as prayer, or praiſe, or any exerciſe of piety, juſtice or benevolence.

A *ſeventh* part of time ſeems to be a reaſonable proportion for ſacred uſe. Too frequent a return of holy time would exclude the neceſſary occupations of the world. Too long intervals would leave the pious ſentiments awakened in our devout exerciſes to languiſh and expire. Tho' we cannot ſay, that this is the only proportion, which would anſwer the purpoſes of piety, without intruding on the duties of common life, yet experience teaches us, that it is juſtly and wiſely choſen. Which of the ſeven days ſhould be conſecrated to religion, in preference to the others, reaſon could form no judgment. This depends on poſitive inſtitution, and belongs not at all to the morality of the command. And therefore, tho' the ſabbath cannot be aboliſhed, yet the day may be changed. From the time of the creation, there was a natural propriety in reſting from the labors of life, on the day, on which the work of creation ceaſed, becauſe this would aptly bring to mind that vaſt and ſtupendous work.

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The deliverance of the Jews from the bondage of Egypt, was an event, in which that nation were deeply intereſted, and which, in all generations, they ought thankfully to commemorate. Therefore the renovation of the ancient inſtitution, ſo far as it peculiarly reſpected them, had a ſpecial reference to this deliverance; and their obſervance of the ſabbath is urged by this, in addition to other arguments. 'Keep the ſabbath day, and ſanctify it, as the Lord hath commanded thee ——Remember, that thou waſt a bondman in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord brought thee out thence with a mighty hand; therefore he commanded thee to keep the ſabbath day.'

The Jewiſh ſabbath was appointed to be on the day of this deliverance. Thus it would be a mere pertinent commemoration of it. The reſurrection of Chriſt, by which he finiſhed the work of our redemption, was an event far more grand, intereſting and glorious. Hence there was a manifeſt propriety in ſetting apart that day of the week, on which he aroſe, to be obſerved in perpetual remembrance of this event. This was eminently the *Lord's* day; and as ſuch it was revered and obſerved in all churches of the ſaints.

We propoſed to ſhew,

II. How John was *employed* on this ſacred day. It appears from the text, and the words connected with it, that he ſpent *this*, and doubtleſs other Lord's days, in the exerciſes of religious worſhip.

As he was confined to a place uninhabited, he had no opportunity to join in thoſe ſocial devotions, which were a uſual part of the buſineſs of the Lord's day among the early chriſtians. But he did not forget the day, when it returned. He remembered it in diſtinction from all other days, and ſpent it, as far as he was able, in conformity to the ſacred deſign of its inſtitution. He did not give himſelf to indolence and ſlumber, as if there were nothing to be done; but applied himſelf to the duties of private devotion. This is implied in the expreſſion, *I was in the Spirit*. He had a viſion of the aſſembled churches, and of Jeſus walking in the midſt of them. He attended to the inſtructions given him by Chriſt relative to the work

which

which he had to perform, particularly to the admonitions, which he was to ſend to the churches in Aſia. Not able to go and preach to them in perſon, he employed the day in writing letters of reproof, inſtruction, and conſolation, that they might know what the Spirit ſaid to them.

It was by humble prayer, that the prophets of old were prepared to receive the viſions of God. Daniel, before he was made acquainted with the great deſigns of providence concerning the church, ſet himſelf to ſearch the word of God, and to ſeek light and direction from him by earneſt ſupplication. The viſions, which he has recorded, were made to him in conſequence of faſting and prayer and reading the books of former prophets. In like manner John was prepared for the diſcoveries made to him. He remembered the Lord's day. He gave himſelf to meditation and prayer, and doubtleſs alſo to reading the prophets; for from them he has taken many of the expreſſions, and moſt of the figurative deſcriptions, which we find in this book. While he was ſeeking divine grace, light and comfort in theſe devout exerciſes of the Lord's day, the heavenly communications were made to him.

This leads us to conſider,

III. The *benefit*, which the apoſtle found, in attending on the duties of the Lord's day.

He ſays, *I was in the Spirit.* This phraſe eſpecially intends the communication of the Spirit of prophecy, as appears from the following deſcription of the viſion preſented to him. The phraſe is again uſed in the ſame manner in the 4th chapter. The expreſſion, in this high ſenſe, is applicable only to the prophets of God. But there is a ſenſe in which it may be applied to every pious and humble Chriſtian. As there was an extraordinary operation of the Spirit, peculiar to the prophetic and apoſtolic ages, ſo there is an ordinary influence, common to all ages of the church.

The Spirit of God is repreſented as dwelling in the hearts of true believers, to ſanctify them more and more from ſin, to aſſiſt them in prayer, to ſtrengthen them in duty, to comfort them in trouble, to ſuccour them in temptations,

tations, and to ſeal them unto the day of redemption. And in regard of theſe gracious influences, they are ſaid *to be in the Spirit*. The apoſtle ſays to the Romans, 'ye are not in the fleſh, but *in the Spirit*, if ſo be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. If any man have not the Spirit of Chriſt, he is none of his.'

The Lord's day is the time, when Chriſtians moſt eminently experience the communication of the Spirit; for the word and ordinances adminiſtred on this day, are the means by which God imparts his grace to humble ſouls; and it is in a diligent attendance on theſe means, that they are to hope for his grace.

God promiſed of old, 'In every place, where I record my name, I will come unto you and bleſs you.' Similar to this is the promiſe of our Savior; 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midſt of them.' It is by an attendance on the inſtituted duties of the ſanctuary, that Chriſtians increaſe in knowledge and holineſs, have their doubts removed and their darkneſs diſpelled, and feel their virtuous reſolutions animated and confirmed. Chriſt gave paſtors and teachers for the edifying of his body, that all might come to perfect men in him.

We may add farther: The conviction and converſion of ſinners are, in ſcripture, aſcribed to the Spirit of God. The preaching of the word is the ordinary mean of converſion: but it is by concurrent divine influence, that the word becomes effectual to this end. The ſinner, therefore, awakened to a ſenſe of ſin, convinced of his danger, and 'framing his ways to turn unto God,' may be ſaid to be *in the Spirit*—to be a ſubject of divine operation. As God is pleaſed ordinarily to grant his ſpirit in the uſe of thoſe means, which are to be ſtatedly enjoyed on the Lord's day, ſo this is the ſeaſon, when ſinners have moſt reaſon to hope for the effectual working of God's power in their ſouls. Lydia's heart was opened, while ſhe was hearing the word. It was on the day of pentecoſt, while Peter was preaching, that the multitude were pricked in their hearts. It was when this apoſtle was ſpeaking the word to Cornelius and his friends, that the Holy Ghoſt

fell

fell on them. The Galations received the ſpirit in the hearing of faith. As the word of God is the appointed mean of obtaining the Spirit, and as the Lord's day is the appointed ſeaſon of hearing the word, ſo this is the time, when we are moſt likely to receive the heavenly gift. Therefore ſeek the Lord, while he may be found; call upon him when he is near. Aſk and ye ſhall receive; for he gives his Spirit to them who aſk him.

SERMON II.

Revelation I. 10.
I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day.

THE Chriſtian ſabbath, or the firſt day of the week, is here called, the *Lord's, day*; it being the day, on which he aroſe from the dead, and which he appointed to be obſerved among Chriſtians, as a ſeaſon of religious worſhip.

On *this* day John was employed in ſuch exerciſes of piety and devotion, as were ſuited to his ſolitary condition, and to the general ſtate of the church, whoſe proſperity lay with weight on his mind.

Being thus employed, he received ſome ſpecial communications of the divine Spirit. He had a view of the bleſſed Jeſus in his exalted glory—a view reſembling, but far ſurpaſſing that which he formerly had, when he was with him on the mount. And he had alſo a diſcovery of the great deſigns of providence with regard to the church, from that time to the end of the world. The Spirit of revelation and prophecy, which John enjoyed on the Lord's day, was peculiar to the times of inſpiration. But there is an influence of the Spirit common to all ages.

And

And this we may hope to obtain by our attendance on the inſtitutions of the goſpel on the appointed day. Chriſtians on this day may receive the ſanctifying and comforting preſence of the Spirit ; and ſinners may hope to become the ſubjects of his convincing and converting power.

On theſe thoughts we enlarged in our preceding diſcourſe.

I ſhall now call your attention to the reflections and inferences, which naturally reſult from our ſubject.

I. As a day has been ſet apart by divine authority for the commemoration of Chriſt's death and reſurrection ; we may hence *conclude*, that theſe were events vaſtly important to mankind, and worthy to be remembered in all ages of the world. If Jeſus had been only a common man, and his death and reſurrection unintereſting occurrences, a day would not have been ſequeſtered to perpetuate the remembrance of them.

Moſes, the great lawgiver of the Jewiſh nation, was deſervedly held in high eſtimation among them for his inſtitutions and miracles, virtues and ſelf denials. But leſt a ſuperſtitious veneration ſhould be paid to him, his burial was ſo ordered in providence, that the place of it was utterly unknown.

Next to Moſes, Elijah was a man of moſt diſtinguiſhed eminence among the Jews. He reſtored to its primitive purity the divine law, which had been corrupted by the intermixture of pagan rites. He performed many ſurpriſing miracles. He acted in the cauſe of religion, with a warm and animated zeal. He encountered oppoſition, and endured affliction, with ſingular fortitude and patience. To reward his great piety and patriotiſm, and to prevent a ſuperſtitious remembrance of him, he was tranſlated to heaven, and exempted from death.

No day was ſequeſtered, nor form of worſhip inſtituted in memory of theſe high and diſtinguiſhed characters ; but, on the contrary, particular care was taken, that nothing like religious veneration ſhould be paid to their names. A grateful remembrance is due to publick benefactors ; but no feſtivals have ever been divinely inſtituted in honor of their perſons, or in memory of their ſervices. Certainly

then

then we muſt conclude, that Jeſus Chriſt is a character ſuperior to all human characters; and that his death and reſurrection are events, in which mankind are more intereſted, than in any other event, which has taken place in the world.

A day was ſet apart in commemoration of the creation. An additional reaſon for the religious obſervance of a ſabbath among the Jews, was their glorious deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. The former was a work worthy to be commemorated by all mankind. The latter was an event peculiarly deſerving of a grateful remembrance among the Jews. But when the Redeemer died on the croſs, and roſe again from the dead, another day was appointed, inſtead of the former, to celebrate the wonders of his redemption. We may then conclude, that redemption is a work more worthy of our remembrance, than creation itſelf. Creation has given us a rational exiſtence: Redemption has procured for us a happy immortality. If poſitive happineſs is of more value, than bare exiſtence, we are more indebted to divine goodneſs for the work of redemption, than for that of creation.

The ſuperſtition of heathens has deified certain heroes and conquerors; and the ſuperſtition of ſome nominal Chriſtians has canonized particular ſaints, and appointed days for the celebration of their virtues and works; but divine inſtitution has honored with this diſtinction none but our glorious Redeemer, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. To him, in the religious obſervance of his day, let us devoutly pay the honor due to his merits.

II. Our ſubject teaches us, that it is the indiſpenſible duty of all Chriſtians, living within a convenient vicinity, to aſſociate for the maintenance of, and an attendance upon the inſtituted worſhip of God. The appointment of a particular day for this object beſpeaks its ſolemn importance.

The Jews, on their ſabbath, were to have a holy convocation. The early Chriſtians, on the Lord's day, came together to break bread, hear the word, and unite in prayers and praiſes. The believers in Corinth are ſaid to have met together in one place. The Hebrew Chriſtians

are cautioned, not to forſake their religious aſſemblies. In the ſeveral provinces of Aſia, there were diſtinct churches, and each church had its fixed paſtor. To the paſtors John directs his epiſtles, to be by them communicated to the people of their reſpective charges. Wherever the apoſtles found a number of believers, ſo ſituated that they could aſſemble together, they collected them into a church ; and in *every* church they ordained an elder. They never allowed Chriſtians to live in a diſconnected ſtate, nor churches to continue without a paſtor.

Their example teaches Chriſtians their duty in all ages. They are bound to aſſociate for the maintenance of divine worſhip, and to procure them pious and able miniſters, who may ſtatedly preſide in their religious ſolemnities. And every Chriſtian, as he has opportunity, is bound to join himſelf to ſome ſuch ſociety, for his own and the common edification. No man has a right to live unconnected with the church ; and no church has a right to continue deſtitute of a paſtor. Theſe are not matters of human option, but divine injunction. As Chriſt has purchaſed the church with his blood, inſtituted ſocial worſhip in it, given paſtors and teachers for its edification, and appointed a day, in which it ſhall ſtatedly aſſemble, they who voluntarily, or negligently continue without a miniſter, without ſtated worſhip, and without the obſervance of the Lord's day, live in plain diſobedience to his authority, and in open contempt of his grace and love.

We ſee, then that they who change the place of their worldly habitation, ſhould keep in view the worſhip of God. Men have a right to alter their ſituation, when they think they can mend it ; to ſell one inheritance and purchaſe another, when they reaſonably expect to meliorate their condition. But in all their removes they ſhould preſerve a regard to divine worſhip, ſhould either go to places where it is enjoyed, or ſpeedily ſeek the enjoyment of it where they go. This was the temper of the Pſalmiſt ; ' God ſhall chooſe our inheritance for us, even the excellency of Jacob, which he loved.' This *excellency* or *glory* of Jacob, was the ſanctuary, which God had ordained, and the worſhip, which he had inſtituted. The

Pſalmiſt

Pſalmiſt refers it to Providence to chooſe for him his earthly inheritance; but with this humble and pious reſerve, that it might be in a place, where God was known and worſhipped. 'This one thing he deſired of the Lord, and this he ſought after, that he might dwell in the houſe of the Lord all the days of his life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire at his temple.' This privilege, has ſo near a connection with the exiſtence of religion, and with the hope of Salvation, that a pious man, ſooner than part with it, will forego every worldly intereſt.

III. Our ſubject teaches us the importance of attending on divine inſtitutions. It is thus that we are to obtain the Spirit.

We are dependent on God in the concerns of religion, as well as in thoſe of common life. Of ourſelves, without the grace of God, we are no more ſufficient to effect our preparation for heaven, than, without the bleſſing of his providence, we are ſufficient to procure our daily bread. But his grace no more ſuperſedes our labors in the former caſe, than his providence excludes our diligence in the latter. To obtain the bleſſing of his providence on our huſbandry, we muſt apply the means which nature and experience point out. To obtain the influence of his Spirit in the work of our Salvation, we muſt apply the means, which his word preſcribes. The ſabbath, the preaching of the goſpel, joint prayer, and ſocial worſhip are inſtitutions of God; and, while we enjoy them, we are to expect his bleſſing only in the uſe of them.

God doubtleſs could grant his Spirit independently of theſe means; nor will we preſume to ſay, how far his grace may interpoſe in behalf of ſome, to whom theſe means are denied. But we, who enjoy them, cannot expect his bleſſing in the neglect of them. God could reveal to every mortal the goſpel ſcheme, as eaſily as he revealed it to the apoſtles; and he could form men's hearts to embrace it by his immediate energy, as well as by the intervention of external means. But this is not the way in which he has choſen to deal with us. He has given us a written revelation—he has appointed teachers to open the doctrines,

doctrines, and inculcate the precepts contained in this revelation. And he grants his Spirit in the hearing of faith. 'Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.'

God will not do that for men immediately, which they are capable of obtaining in the use of the means which he has given them.

When there was no written revelation, God often communicated his will to men in an immediate way. As the written revelation began to appear, these immediate communications became less frequent. And when revelation was complete, they wholly ceased.

When Saul of Tarsus, who made havock of the church, was on his way to Damascus, with a commission to destroy the Christians there, Jesus, that he might bring the persecutor to a conviction of his madness, spake to him by a voice from heaven, and made himself known to him as the Savior whom he was persecuting. Saul now enquired, 'Lord, what will thou have me to do?' Jesus could as easily have instructed him in his future duty, as have spoken what he had already. But that was not necessary. There were other means of information within Saul's reach. Jesus therefore says to him, 'Go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do!' He obeyed; and Ananias was sent to instruct him.

When the devout Gentile Cornelius prayed in his house, his prayer rose up before God, and an angel was sent to tell him, where he might find an apostle, who could instruct him in the way of salvation. God could as easily have taught Cornelius by inspiration, as have taught the apostles. And the angel, if such had been his orders, might as well have given him instruction on this subject, as have directed him to send for Peter. But God will have his institutions honored. He would not by inspiration, or by a message from heaven, teach this Gentile the things, which he could learn by applying to a minister of Christ. Cornelius could not, by his own reason, investigate the way of salvation. But he could send for Peter; hear the apostle when he came; and understand what he said. Had he refused to apply to Peter, or to

hear

hear him preach, his inability to find out the way of ſalvation, would have been no excuſe for his ignorance.

Farther: The goſpel teaches us, that we are ſaved, not of ourſelves, but by the grace of God. A doctrine worthy of all acceptation; but no way tending to encourage indolence.

Salvation is the purchaſe of Chriſt. In this view it is wholly his own work, we have nothing to do in it. It is the gift of God: We can do no more to deſerve it for ourſelves, than we have done to purchaſe it for the world. The goſpel teaches us the way of ſalvation: Had we not been taught the way, we never could have found it. Repentance is the condition of pardon; and to this divine grace is neceſſary. Thus all things are of God.

But then we are rational beings—there are means put into our hands—and with the means God often gives ſome attendant influence of his Spirit; for the goſpel is called *a miniſtration of the Spirit*. The means afforded us we muſt apply to the purpoſe for which they were appointed. Thus we are to hope for God's bleſſing. 'To him who hath, ſhall more be given.' If we neglect the plain inſtitutions of God, deſpiſe his word and worſhip, and profane his day, there is no ground to expect, that his ſpirit will be given us; for there is no encouragement in ſcripture, that it will be given in this way.

IV. Our ſubject farther teaches us, that the Lord's day is a ſeaſon peculiarly favorable to the purpoſes of religion.

On this day John was in the ſpirit. He certainly had ſome good reaſon for informing the churches of this circumſtance. And what could it be, but to recommend to them the religious obſervance of the day, as a mean of obtaining the ſpirit.

The churches, to whom he wrote, were generally fallen from their firſt purity. The purport of his letters was to reprove them for their declenſions, and exhort them to repentance. He tells them that what he wrote was dictated by the ſpirit of Chriſt, and that he received the ſpirit on the Lord's day—that on this day Chriſt walks in the midſt

midſt of his churches, and that if they would receive his ſpirit, they muſt meet him in his ſanctuary, where he walks.

Here is a plain intimation, that the declenſion of religion among them had been owing to a neglect of the Chriſtian Sabbath; and that the revival of religion would depend on a more ſtrict obſervance of that day.

It appears from John's letters to ſome of theſe churches, that their declenſion had been cauſed, in a great meaſure, by the influence of certain irregular teachers, who, under falſe pretenſions, had gained admiſſion among them, diſturbed their order, and corrupted their ſentiments. It is common, that ſuch teachers divert men from the ſtated worſhip of the Lord's day, by ſubſtituting other times of worſhip in its place. John would have Chriſtians ſtrictly attend to the inſtituted worſhip of the holy Sabbath. He ſuggeſts to them, that the day of the Lord was the ſeaſon, and his ordinances were the means of obtaining his grace. Chriſtians muſt be builded together for an habitation of God thro' the ſpirit, and by peace and union in ſacred duties grow into an holy temple in the Lord.

Other days, beſides the Sabbath, are ſometimes pointed out in providence, and may be uſefully employed for the purpoſe of ſocial worſhip. But occaſional ſeaſons muſt never ſupplant the Lord's day. When this is the caſe, they rather obſtruct, than promote religion. An attendance on occaſional worſhip is a matter of Chriſtian prudence; an attendance on the ſtated worſhip of the Sabbath is matter of divine requirement and moral obligation. Paul, when neceſſity required, taught out of ſeaſon, as well as in ſeaſon; and from houſe to houſe, as well as publickly. Thus he did in Epheſus, when the goſpel was firſt introduced there. But ſeaſonable and publick teaching he preferred. At Troas he waited ſeven days for the return of the Lord's day, when the diſciples would of courſe come together. Other ſeaſons, prudently choſen, may be uſeful; but on this day we have moſt reaſon to expect God's bleſſing. If we wiſh for the power of religion in our own hearts, and the promotion of it among others, we muſt honor this day.

V. We

V. We are taught, that, under ordinary circumſtances, we cannot be excuſed from the duties of the Sabbath. John, even in a ſtate of baniſhment and ſolitude, found ſomething to do.

As ſocial worſhip is an inſtitution of God, every one, as there is opportunity, is bound to attend upon it. This however, is not the only duty of the Lord's day. There are other more private exerciſes, which belong to it. It is to be 'a Sabbath to the Lord in our *dwellings*.' We are to 'call the holy of the Lord honorable, and to honor him, not doing our own ways, nor finding our own pleaſure, nor ſpeaking our own words.' We are to withdraw ourſelves from the cares and occupations of the world, and employ our private hours in meditation, ſelf examination and prayer, and in profitable converſation and reading—in exerciſes adapted to promote perſonal piety, and in inſtructions ſuited to advance family religion.

VI. We are here farther inſtructed, that we ought to improve the Lord's day with an aim and deſire to obtain the Spirit in thoſe gracious influences, which are ſuited to our condition and character. We ſhould come to God's houſe hoping that we may receive a word in ſeaſon, and that the word may be attended with the holy Ghoſt and with power.

Sinners ſhould deſire the convincing and converting influences of the Spirit. The work of conviction is produced by the Spirit operating with the word. The Spirit was given by Chriſt to convince the world of ſin. The word is the ſword of the Spirit. In hearing the word, the Jews, at the feaſt of pentecoſt, were pricked in the heart. The Lord's day is the time in which, and the preached word is the mean by which the Spirit uſually convinces ſinners, and begins a good work in them. The ſtated exerciſes of the ſabbath are indeed ſometimes the means of conviction to thoſe, who had no ſuch aim in attending on them. The Jews, on the day of pentecoſt, received laſting benefit from a goſpel ſermon, which they had no previous intention or deſire to hear. But where any ſerious diſpoſition already exiſts, there is ſtill greater hope of ſpiritual

itual benefit. If then you view yourſelves as being in a ſtate of unpardoned guilt, and feel any ſolicitude to be delivered from this ſtate, attend on the publick ſolemnities of the ſanctuary, give earneſt heed to the things which you hear, apply to yourſelves what is pertinent to your caſe, and pray for the Spirit to impreſs it deeply on your hearts. And let the ſerious ſentiments, awakened in hearing the word, accompany you in the ordinary buſineſs of life. Take heed, that the affairs of the world extinguiſh not your ſabbath feelings; but let your better frames govern you in your worldly labors, and reſtrain your worldly affections.

If you are in affliction, go to God's houſe with a deſire to hear ſome inſtructive and conſoling truths adapted to your caſe, and with theſe to receive the guiding and ſupporting influences of that Spirit, who is called the comforter. David, in the houſe of his pilgrimage, made God's ſtatutes his ſong. He confeſſed that, unleſs God's law had been his delight, he ſhould have periſhed in his affliction.' Aſaph in his perplexities went to God's ſanctuary, and there found relief. Hannah, in the bitterneſs of her ſpirit, repaired to the temple of God, and there poured out her ſoul before him. 'And ſhe went her way, and her countenance was no more ſad.'

If you view yourſelves as ſaints, ſo improve the Lord's day, that it may be a mean of rendering you more holy and heavenly. Seek a greater meaſure of the Spirit's ſanctifying influence.

To be *in the Spirit*, is to poſſeſs and exerciſe that temper which is the fruit of the Spirit. 'This is in all goodneſs, righteouſneſs and truth.' We are in the Spirit, when the Spirit awakens into exerciſe thoſe pious and benevolent diſpoſitions, in which the religion of the goſpel conſiſts.

We are eſpecially required to exerciſe theſe graces in the publick ſolemnities of the Lord's day, prayer, praiſe, and hearing the word. All theſe things are to be done with charity, meekneſs and humility. When we ſtand praying, we are to forgive, if we have ought againſt any man. We are to ſing praiſes with grace in our hearts,

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with thankfulneſs to God, and peaceableneſs and benevolence to men. In hearing the word we are to lay aſide all malice, envy, guile and hypocriſy, and receive with meekneſs the engrafted word, that it may ſave our ſouls. When we thus worſhip God on the Lord's day, we may be ſaid, *to be in the Spirit*, for we have thoſe tempers, which are the fruits of the Spirit.

But let us not imagine, that theſe goodly frames are required only on the Lord's day—that if we are ſerious, grave and devout then, we may indulge our paſſions, and live to the world every day beſides. The religious exerciſes of the Lord's day are inſtituted to make us conſtantly and habitually pious and holy.

We are to be in the ſpirit on this day, that we may walk in the ſpirit every day. We are to forgive, when we ſtand praying—to have the peace of God in our hearts, when we are ſinging—to put on humility and meekneſs, when we are hearing, that we may be always of a meek, humble, peaceable and forgiving temper. If ſuch a temper is right in the duties of devotion, it is right alſo in the duties of common life. In vain we pretend, that we are in the ſpirit of Chriſt on his day, if we are in the ſpirit of the world on all other days. Let us, therefore, at all times, put on humbleneſs of mind, meekneſs, goodneſs and love, which are the fruits of the ſpirit. Thus it will appear, that we have not received the ſpirit of the world, but the ſpirit, which is of God, and that we know the things, which are freely given us of God.

CONCLUSION.

Our ſubject may with great propriety, be applied to the people diſperſed in the wilderneſs, and in the new ſettlements, for whoſe benefit the publication of it is principally intended.

To you, our friends and brethren, we addreſs our affectionate advice.

In regard to your own, and your children's worldly intereſt, you have removed to a diſtance from us. But we hope, you have carried with you thoſe ſentiments of regard for the goſpel and the day of our Lord, which you

entertained while you were among us. And we entreat you not to forget them, nor ſuffer them to languiſh in your hearts.

Pay an early attention to the enjoyment of the goſpel miniſtry in the places where you are. Let not the paucity of your numbers, or the poverty of your condition plead for too long a delay, leſt your children, growing up unaccuſtomed to this divine inſtitution ſhould contract an indifference to it; and even ſome, who are older, ſhould, by long diſuſe, ſink into habitual careleſſneſs; and thus your difficulties, inſtead of being diminiſhed by an increaſe of wealth and numbers, ſhould be increaſed by the diminution of virtue and piety. For your encouragement, think of the example of the fathers of our country. In all their new plantations, one of the firſt objects was the enjoyment of goſpel ordinances, and the ſettlement of an able miniſter. In their zeal they found ability; and God proſpered them. For our preſent national happineſs we are much indebted to their ſocial ſpirit, love of order, attention to family education, and reverence for divine inſtitutions.

Look to the example of the holy patriarchs. They were pilgrims in the world. But in all their peregrinations they ſhewed a governing regard to God and his worſhip. And wherever they made a ſtand, their firſt work was to erect an altar to God, at which they, and all, who accompanied them, might attend for ſocial devotion. Thus they preſerved religion in their own hearts, maintained it in their houſeholds; and recommended it to the people among whom they ſojourned; and thus they obtained the promiſe of God's bleſſing on their poſterity.

As you have come from different parts to ſettle on the ſame ground, it is natural to expect, that there ſhould be ſome diverſity in your ſentiments and uſages. But let not this diverſity obſtruct your meaſures for obtaining religious order and a ſtated miniſtry. Avoid vain jangling and perverſe diſputing, and exerciſe yourſelves to godlineſs. Diſtinguiſh between things eſſential, and things circumſtantial in religion. A proper zeal for the former will always

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be accompanied with condeſcention in the latter. Exerciſe the ſame charity, humility and forbearance, which ſaint Paul inculcated, in his day, on the *Jewiſh*, and the *Gentile* believers; and you may, as they did, unite in the ſame church, and under the ſame miniſtry; for we truſt, your differences are, in few inſtances, greater than were theirs. The rule which this apoſtle gives you is, that 'you reject not thoſe, whom God receives.' This rule, well obſerved, will have a happy tendency to unite you.

While you are deſtitute of a ſtated miniſtry improve the means, which you have.

Attend on the miſſionaries, whom we ſend among you. We ſhall ſend only ſuch as can be well recommended—men duly authorized, and competently furniſhed for their miſſion—men of ability, learning and piety—men of pacific, candid and conciliating diſpoſitions—men who will ſtudy to edify you in love, not to ſow diſcord, and cauſe diviſions among you.

If you have not a miniſter, yet forſake not the aſſembling of yourſelves together. Statedly meet on the Lord's day, join together in prayer, and let there be a portion of ſcripture, or ſome pious book read in your aſſemblies. Thus you will promote brotherly peace and love; thus you will cheriſh in youthful minds ſentiments of reverence for religion, for the goſpel, and for the Lord's day.

On this day, forbear all unneceſſary ſecular labor and worldly diſcourſe, and reſtrain your children from diverſion and amuſement, and every thing inconſiſtent with its ſacred deſign. Remember, how John kept the day in a wilderneſs. Let it be a ſabbath to God in your hearts, and in your dwellings.

Maintain daily religion in your families. Let your houſes be houſes of prayer. Let the holy ſcriptures be read in them. Train up your youth in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Walk before them in a perfect way. Thus let there be a little church in every houſe; and ſoon there will be a houſe for God in every plantation, and his houſe will be filled.

Cultivate the ſpirit of religion in your hearts, and exhibit the virtues of it in your lives. Conſider one anoth-

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to provoke unto love and good works, and be fellow-workers to the kingdom of God.

We wish you health and prosperity; and, above all, that your souls may be in health and prosper. Great will be our joy, if we hear, that you and your children walk in the truth, the order and purity of the gospel.

How transporting to John, in the wilderness, must have been that vision, in which he saw, on the Lord's day, the churches of the Redeemer assembled in their respective temples, to mingle hearts and voices, to offer joint prayers and praises, and to hear the glorious doctrine of salvation; and, at the same time, beheld the Lord Jesus, dressed in his robes of majesty and grace, walking among them to observe their order, diffuse his influence, bless his ordinances, and offer incense with the prayers of his saints? This nearly resembled his subsequent vision, in which he saw a door opened in heaven, a throne there placed, and saints and angels surrounding it with harps and songs, and giving glory and honor and thanks to him who sat upon it, and who lives for ever and ever.

A sight like this was enough to turn his wilderness into paradise—his Isle of Patmos into the Garden of Eden.

Could we see you, our brethren, who are scattered in the wilderness, every where gathering into churches, erecting sanctuaries for God, assembling in them on the Lord's day, calling ministers of Christ to preside in your solemnities, walking together in purity, peace and love, and thus exhibiting a proof that the Lord is among you of a truth, we should feel a joy approaching toward that, which saint John must have felt; and our joy would be the joy of you all. May God pour down his spirit and blessing upon you from on high, and comfort all your desolate places; may he soon make your wilderness as Eden, and your desert as the garden of the Lord: may joy and gladness be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody.

FINIS.

ERRATA.—Page 9, 3d line from the bottom, vicissitudes for vicisitudes—p. 10, bottom l. exhortations for exortations—p. 12, l. 14, more for mere—p. 15, first l. Galatians for Galations.